

THE CLAIMS

1. (Previously presented) A medical imaging system comprising:
a central processing unit;
a data storage unit in communication with said central processing unit;
~~an~~ a medical imaging device in electrical communication with said central processing unit; and

a biometric authorization unit in electrical communication with said central processing unit, wherein a user inputs a biometric identifier into said biometric authorization unit in order to enable imaging use of the medical imaging system, wherein biometric data extracted from the biometric identifier is compared with stored biometric data in said data storage unit, wherein the stored biometric data is associated with stored personal identification information, wherein the stored biometric data and the stored personal identification information are stored after an initial registration, and wherein user preference information with respect to imaging capabilities of said medical imaging device is associated with the stored biometric data and with the personal identification information.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Canceled)

4. (Previously presented) The medical imaging system of claim 1, wherein imaging use of the medical imaging system is allowed when a match exists

between the biometric data extracted from the biometric identifier and the stored biometric data.

5. (Previously presented) The medical imaging system of claim 1, wherein information regarding the use of the medical imaging system by the user is stored in said data storage unit.

6. (Previously presented) The medical imaging system of claim 1, wherein said medical imaging device is an ultrasound probe and the medical imaging system is an ultrasound imaging system.

7. (Previously presented) The medical imaging system of claim 1, wherein the medical imaging system is one of a Computed Tomography (CT), X-ray, Positron Emission Tomography (PET), Single Photon Emission Computed Tomography (SPECT), Electron Beam Tomography (EBT), Magnetic Resonance (MR), and image-guided surgery system.

8. (Previously presented) The medical imaging system of claim 1, wherein the biometric identifier is at least one of a fingerprint, handprint, voice, iris, retina, and facial thermogram.

9. (Previously presented) The medical imaging system of claim 1, wherein the medical imaging system is networked into at least one other imaging system.

10. (Previously presented) A medical imaging network comprising a plurality of medical imaging systems in communication with one another, each of said medical imaging systems comprising:

a medical imaging device; and

a biometric authorization unit, wherein a user inputs a biometric identifier into said biometric authorization unit in order to use the medical imaging device to image a patient; and

a central management station in communication with each of said plurality of medical imaging systems, wherein biometric data extracted from the biometric identifier is stored in at least one of a central data storage unit in said central management station and individual data storage units in said plurality of imaging systems, wherein personal identification information and user preference information with respect to imaging capabilities of said medical imaging device are associated with the stored biometric data.

11. (Canceled)

12. (Canceled)

13. (Previously presented) The medical imaging network of claim 10, wherein use information, including at least one of user identity, time, and length of an imaging session at each of said plurality of imaging systems is stored within at least one of said central management station and any of said plurality of imaging systems.

14. (Previously presented) The medical imaging network of claim 10, wherein a user initially registers at one of said central management station and one of said plurality of imaging systems.

15. (Canceled)

16. (Original) The medical imaging network of claim 10, wherein at least one of said plurality of imaging devices is an ultrasound probe.

17. (Original) The medical imaging network of claim 10, wherein each of said plurality of imaging systems is one of a Computed Tomography (CT), X-ray, Positron Emission Tomography (PET), Single Photon Emission Computed Tomography (SPECT), Electron Beam Tomography (EBT), Magnetic Resonance (MR), and image-guided surgery system.

18. (Original) The medical imaging network of claim 10, wherein the biometric identifier is at least one of a fingerprint, handprint, voice, iris, retina, and facial thermogram.

19. (Previously presented) A method of using a medical imaging system comprising:

registering to use the medical imaging system, said registering comprising:

(i) inputting a biometric identifier into a biometric authorization unit;

(ii) inputting personal information into the medical imaging system;

and

(iii) associating biometric data extracted from the biometric identifier with the personal information;

storing the biometric data and associated personal information;

storing individual imaging preferences for the medical imaging system as user preference information and associating the user preference information with the biometric data and the personal information; and

enabling imaging use of the medical imaging system when biometric data input at the biometric authorization unit matches stored biometric data.

20. (Canceled)

21. (Original) The method of claim 19, further comprising allowing said registering step by inputting a password.

22. (Original) The method of claim 19, wherein the medical imaging system is one of an ultrasound, Computed Tomography (CT), X-ray, Positron Emission Tomography (PET), Single Photon Emission Computed Tomography (SPECT), Electron Beam Tomography (EBT), Magnetic Resonance (MR), and image-guided surgery system.

23. (Original) The method of claim 19, wherein the biometric identifier is at least one of a fingerprint, handprint, voice, iris, retina, and facial thermogram.

24-27. (Canceled)